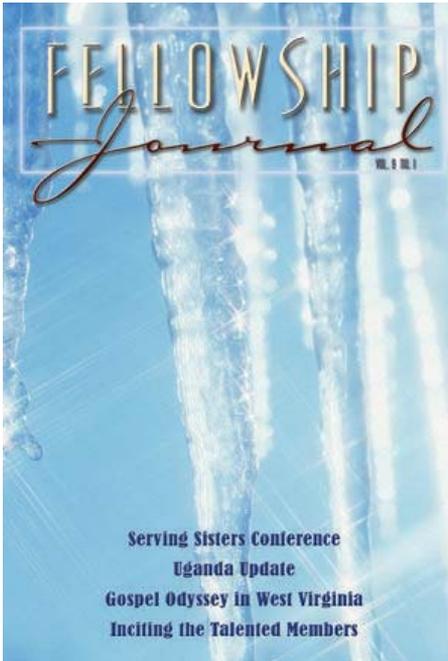


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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Contents

Serving Sisters
Conference

News of Uganda

Practical Fellowship
unto the Gospel

“Heretofore”

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The website
Ministrymessages.org
will soon be posting entire texts of corrected and revised books
by Titus Chu, such as:

RUTH

ELIJAH & ELISHA

DAVID

and a new release covering the book of

PHILIPPIANS

(in .pdf format)



*Songs & Hymns
of Life*

This new hymn book with 533 songs and hymns is now being printed and should be ready for distribution in March or April. The deadline for the preorder price is past, however regular orders will still be received by the *Literature Service of the Church in Cleveland*. Work is also being done to produce MP3 and MIDI files of all the songs in the book to help learn unfamiliar tunes.



Serving Sisters Conference

Message One Notes

Much has been happening and yet many elders remain discouraged due to the fact that they only see their own situation. They see the things that bother and concern them, even though they have come through so much and have survived. Rather than being rejoicing overcomers, however, they seem to be sorrowful! A few of the coworkers who are with me are joyful because they see all that the Lord is doing. You may all be surprised to know how much the Lord is doing. However, we are short of brothers capable enough to meet the need of all that the Lord has done and is doing in the Far East, North America, Africa and Australia. Many places need real apostles.

The Lord's work goes by stages. If those who serve are not able to recognize what is needed at each stage and work accordingly, things will not develop as they should. In one region in Africa, for instance, there are now many churches. I went there thirty years ago, and I can identify with those who see only the problems and the difficulties, for that was what I also witnessed. Now, however, I have also been granted to see what the Lord has done there in the past thirty years since I was last there. Many saints and churches have been raised up. How encouraging!

The elders and workers may be faithful, but they also must have a healthy personality. What we have been through recently has taken its toll on many of those who lead and serve so that, even though they have done well, they have become more conservative. Some see the defeatedness rather than the overcoming element.

We have also seen the Lord do great things in China. Because I wanted to travel with my daughter as she went to China, I was able to keep in contact with some of the brothers and sisters I had known there or who had moved there. I was not involved in the work there, but about four years ago I realized I had to do something on behalf of the saints there. The situation was such that they were going to suffer a real lack if I did not help them.

To be fair to them and to the Lord, I began to labor in a certain city with a handful of saints. Eventually a group of leaders came to see me. They brought with them reprints of some of my books. I prayed a lot and eventually had a feeling to call a certain brother and spend time with him. Therefore I took a flight and drove to his town. He invited a few others to meet me. When I arrived I found they had a rather good-sized hall, even though the village was rather small. I found in that area there were a number of churches. Eventually, with the government's permission, we were allowed to hold a conference of over 2000. (There are 14 churches with about 4000 saints in that area.)

In one locality, some saints began to meet together after they were excluded from the LSM-controlled assembly. Now there are a few hundred meeting together. The Lord is doing a lot. Even though they are not that trained, many are preaching the gospel in the places they move to. Since many of the saints move, there are new churches coming into existence all the time. (In China there is a saying, "When a man moves, he lives, but when a tree moves, it dies." When you move, you are alive! Therefore, more of us should move! We should take opportunities to have new beginnings.) Currently there are many who are willing to move and pioneer for the Lord.

It seems our current economic situation mirrors the situation among many of the churches today. It is not that there is no cash... there is plenty of cash. The problem is that the bankers don't want to put money into the hands of anyone who might use it to make more money. This is similar to our situation today. The saints are the "cash," but no one dares apply our resources as before. It is true that no one dares guarantee the kinds of returns on investments that they once did. That doesn't mean, however, that the "cash" should be held in the bank, rather than being allowed to "flow"! All the saints have a lot of desire, but there are no "businessmen" who say, "OK! Let's go!" The result is that all the "cash" is depreciating rather than appreciating. (The Euro used to be worth 80 cents; now it costs \$1.50 to buy a Euro. This is because American dollars are depreciating in such a "depressed" economy. The Euro doubled as the American dollar settled. If the trend continues, the people around the world who hold dollars will lose their assurance in America's overall ability to repay.) One brother in China is traveling among many local churches. Another brother is traveling among many other churches. They both are really laboring beyond their strength. There are many congregations who want fellowship. Eventually I believe many of them will be able to come together, but who will be able to labor among so many places that now desire fellowship and are clear about the Lord's commitment?





There is a need to financially support what is happening in many places, particularly where the saints have little financial ability. Regardless of the economic “crisis” here, in the United States we are still comparatively strong.

In China, I hope that within five years we might preach the gospel in fifty major cities. (China’s population is four times that of the US so that any place that is habitable is crowded.)

More than fifty percent of our “assets” (saints) seem to be sitting useless in the churches here. The situation is pretty weak. We may have 1500 saints in the meeting any given Lord’s Day who are in fellowship together (350 or so in the Cleveland metro area). There are 35 English-speaking local churches. Most elders seem to have come to the point that they don’t know what to do anymore. They seem to either have an issue with Brother Lee, with myself, or with the Lord. None of the elders seem to be able to produce a church life that is that attractive. When new ones come to one of our meetings, they typically cannot follow our language (which has become traditional for us). If things continue to develop along these lines, and as I cannot be here all the time to work with you all, we should consider what should be done.

What should the sisters do? We have verses that tell us that sisters should cover their heads, be in subjection, and so on. These verses aren’t that prominent, yet they have been greatly magnified among us, even to the point that sisters end up able to do very little among us. We have lost the function of all the sisters. They can serve, cook, and arrange things, etc., but little else. We have no sister apostles, sister prophets, or sister teachers (even though Watchman Nee himself was saved by a sister and raised up by a sister). It seems that the Lord is mocking us, saying, “Your source came through sisters, and yet you suppress their function.” This is due to the fact that the leaders have seen how much trouble the sisters have caused among the churches, so there are two sides. Yet how could the Lord raise up a sister like M.E. Barber (who raised up Watchman Nee) or Dora Yu (through whom Watchman Nee was saved) or Sister Wang (through whom Witness Lee was saved) among us? We would never allow such a person to be manifested among us, it seems.

Paul did say, “I do not allow a woman to teach.” It seems then that Sister Barber was a peculiar being, who not only raised up many brothers, but also raised up a work in which her co-workers were all sisters who went out and raised up churches! Sixty percent of our “assets” are supposedly considered to be held in

reserve because the Bible tells us that they are to be in subjection and not speak in the meetings. Basically, you sisters are not supposed to do anything, and yet Paul greeted his co-working couple as “Priscilla and Aquila,” placing the sister first. In other places he also comments on the usefulness of the sisters in the work among the churches or within the churches.

What has happened? And what should we do? The Lord has used some sisters such as Jesse Penn-Lewis, who had a clear apprehension of the truth. It was she who raised up T. Austin-Sparks, who was another person that became a great help to Watchman Nee. Should we tell the sisters to have their own meetings and operate powerfully among themselves, and let the brothers wallow on by themselves? Or should we tell you sisters to return to your localities and be rebellious, telling the brothers, “You don’t know what you are doing...from now on we will take care of things”? Neither of these are healthy, but what should we do? We have never been able to tell the sisters exactly what it is they should do.

All the saints are over trained, even to the point that they are “fed up” with the so-called truths. Instead of the truth setting you all free, it apparently has become your bondage!

The culture of the local church life is oppressive to the sisters. I myself am a part of this. I know it is wrong, yet as a brother I cannot seem to help it. It is too easy to label a strong sister as “rebellious,” etc., and forget all that is good about her! Our church culture attacks any sister who has any burden by identifying that sister as going beyond her “place”. I think the sisters should rebel and make mistakes rather than do nothing at all. I would rather see the saints err on the side of doing something they feel the Lord has told them to do, rather than do nothing. I would rather be in a messy situation than a dead one.

I still ask, “What should we do?” In these few meetings perhaps we might, by the Lord’s mercy, find a way in our operation.

For instance, the line of life the Lord measures to a sister is much harder than that He measures to a brother. He was very frank when He said to Eve, “You shall travail in childbirth.” The first reason the sisters cannot be as useful is because they have to raise children. (To not have children would feel like too great of a loss.)

When a sister gets married, her life gets “messed up,” especially when she has children. Even the desire of having things and getting married has children in view. Your center changes when you have





children. Your life becomes occupied not only with giving birth to your children, but also with raising them up. Children affect the mother even more than they affect the father. Eventually they grow up and reach a certain age. When women reach menopause, they are no longer “normal”. That is part of the suffering that comes along with the process of childbirth. If a sister can pass through this and come back to some kind of normality, then she can function in a particular way in the church life. A sister’s life is a suffering life, full of limitation.

A brother’s only limitation occurs when they date. Once the sister agrees to marry, however, that is over. He has the marriage taken care of, and then he turns to other matters he has to take care of. The sister, however, really only enters her troubles at that point. Whether they like it or not, God apportioned to the female such a matter of travail.

A brother once asked me whether I had ever heard of the Peter Principle. According to this principle, a person rises to his or her level of incompetence. Therefore each one of us should know our capacity, and when we have reached it. The problem is that a sister often does NOT know when to stop once she has begun something. So in addition to travailing, secondly the sisters often overdo things so that what initially was a blessing becomes a limitation in the church life.

Thirdly, God has given sisters the gift of sweetness and beauty (when compared to men). A man, therefore, does not pay so much attention to his appearance as a woman does. A woman, in principle, is more sensitive and is more easily offended. When I eat at a love feast, I have learned to take equally from every sister’s dish, never looking at any dish, and never commenting on any dish in particular. (If a man who provided a dish he wouldn’t experience this sensitivity.)

Because women appreciate themselves more than brothers, they thus appreciate their ways. They believe their way works. When a sister begins a spiritual move, it becomes dangerous. In Chefoo, there was a revival that lasted one hundred days. Witness Lee told us that during that time, no one could say what would happen next. In one meeting, no one knew what to do, until one saint began to weep. The entire congregation wept for over an hour, and afterward they were told to go home; everyone left satisfied. The Spirit was really leading. The strong time of the Spirit was destroyed by a sister who brought in tongue speaking. This is one reason Brother Lee was very careful about sisters exercising leadership, even though he and Watchman Nee

were helped so much by sisters, and had very valued co-workers who were sisters. (One of these co-workers did something that caused Brother Nee much suffering regarding his excommunication, and another sister influenced Brother Nee to remain in China during the Communist takeover, even though Brother Lee strongly encouraged him to leave the mainland. We cannot say either sister caused these things, but they each played a crucial part in what happened.)

Tongue speaking comes in most easily when people are dissatisfied. When tongue speaking came in, the move of the Spirit was over. Brother Lee was arrested by the Japanese, and did not expect to live. During that time a sister was leading. A young man died, and the sister told everyone that at a certain time that person would be raised from the dead. The elder used this opportunity to say, “Stop this nonsense now. Let us bury this one.” Then it was over.

If you are not healthy, you can be carried away easily by a good comment, because as a sister you can take that as something to uplift yourself.

These are the four things that we have to take into account when we consider the matter of serving as a sister in the church life. The first, the matter of travailing, is something of the Lord Himself. The second is the tendency not to know when to stop. The third is the tendency to seek ways to be lifted up, which leads to the fourth, the desire to gain appreciation for what one has done, or does.

Men are simpler in many ways. Women should appreciate the fact that they are created more delicate and beautiful than man, and they should also realize that this very element can cause them to live a self-centered life. Women are more likely to seek to be treasured and appreciated by others. Out of this, sisters can develop things beyond what is healthy. Sisters need to be aware of these four things. If sisters can be aware of these things, they can be protected and their healthy function can come forth and be maintained.

Sixty percent of the saints are sisters. They are desirous and good, and should not be repressed. Hopefully from this fellowship we might find a way to carry the church life in a more healthy way.

Titus Chu December 11, 2009 AM Ashland Woods (Sullivan, OH)



A GOSPEL EVENT IN FAYETTEVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA

Wild and Wonderful; that is the slogan of the only state created during the Civil War and the state that hosts the event known world-wide as Bridge Day. On this day, over 100,000 people from all over the U.S. and some other parts of the world come to witness 6,000 people risk their lives as they base-jump (parachute) off a 876ft bridge on I-77. However, 40 of those people didn't come for Bridge Day, they came for a totally different reason; they came to save the town of Fayetteville.

They left their cozy homes, their families, and their lives behind for one weekend. From Ohio, New York, Michigan, and Illinois they came. These 40 people were called by the Lord and by an urging from Brother Titus to evangelize the town of Fayetteville. Prayer after prayer was poured out for the ones who were going, for the town to be open, for the safety of all, and for the weather to be the right weather.

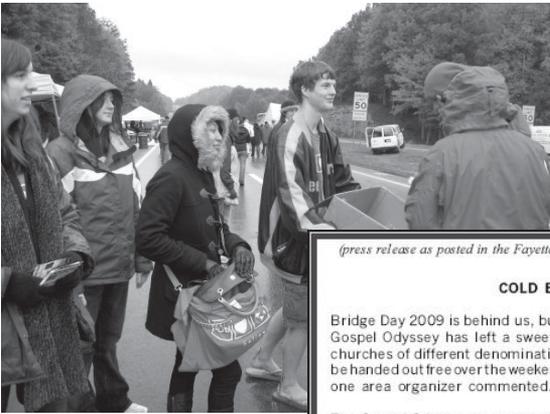
The Lord answered those prayers more than what was asked of Him. The community was open and willing to have their personal lives invaded by strangers who wanted to tell them about the man who erased the sin of the world. They opened their doors, stopped what they were doing, and even welcomed the strangers into their homes.

The first process was to blanket the town with invites to the church community picnic on Lord's Day and to the churches of Fayetteville.

Next, those same houses were revisited for a survey on how a church can help the community. To do this, they had to wake up early so both the invitations and surveys could be done before going to spread the good news at Bridge Day.

After all the invitations and surveys were completed, the Christ-filled 40 went to tackle Bridge Day. Standing out in the cold and rain, a booth was erected and filled with rich hot chocolate and over 4,000 cookies provided by the churches in Fayetteville. Many cold and hungry spectators wandered by and were surprised that these people were standing there happily giving away hot chocolate and cookies, whereas other booths overpriced their goods. When asked why they would go through all the effort and put in the time to make the goodies, then just give them away, the response was "The churches in Fayetteville want you to know that the blessing of God is free and is yours for the taking." Once Bridge Day had ended and the troopers told everyone to pack up, these warm hearted souls stood in the cold and continued to hand out free cookies while thousands passed by headed for home. If that wasn't enough, the young men who still had their strength about them, gracefully freed numerous vans and trucks that were stuck in the mud from the rain.

Even though Bridge Day was over, there was still a plenty left to do. For right after Bridge Day, there was a chili cook-off which was a block away from the First Church of God, which was where all of the invites, surveys, and food were being handled. Working for most of the day, a few of the Jesus lovers put together a puppet show which turned out not



(press release as posted in the Fayette Tribune, October 22)

COLD BRIDGE, WARM HEARTS

Bridge Day 2009 is behind us, but the impact of the area churches teamed up with Gospel Odyssey has left a sweet taste in many people's mouths...literally. Area churches of different denominations worked together to bake over 4000 cookies to be handed out free over the weekend. "This number quite exceeded our expectations," one area organizer commented.

The Gospel Odyssey young people gave away thousands of cookies and 35 gallons of hot cocoa to brave and shivering bridge goers who gratefully cradled the hot cups of cocoa in their hands while their children played free games. When asked why everything was free, one volunteer replied, "Because God's love is free; because Salvation is free!"

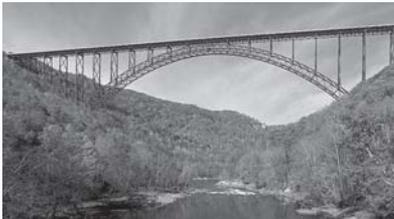
About 40 youth worked tirelessly, often in cold and rain, either going door-to-door with invitations, or handing out free cookies and hot cocoa on the bridge, or presenting a puppet show at the chili cook-off. On Sunday they helped facilitate a large indoor community picnic complete with 3 hours of live music.

Bridge Day participants also received a flyer picturing local pastors and the words, "We're standing together to show our community the love of Jesus Christ!" One worker told visitors, "The churches in Fayetteville love each other. If we Christians can't love each other across denominational lines, then we are just a social club. It is our love for each other that shows the world the reality of His unconditional love."

The weekend climaxed Sunday evening with the deeply moving performance of "Glory to Glory" at the Fayetteville Methodist Church. Fayetteville's Charles Morey and six other students of the Cleveland Institute of Music brought the ancient words of the New Testament into sharp twenty first century focus in an unforgettable combination of music and narrative enhanced by a powerful visual display.

In a more informal venue, two of the violinists whipped out their instruments Monday morning and treated the breakfast crowd at Tudor's Biscuit World to an impromptu duet. Charles Morey and Julian Taylor delighted servers and diners alike, and they brought down the house when they started dancing a jig. One customer commented, "We need more of this kind of joy."

We may see a lot more of this spontaneous joy if the Fayetteville churches continue their commitment to laying down differences and working together to follow Christ's example of love and forgiveness. Much gratitude to all the Fayetteville churches and Gospel Odyssey for leading the way this weekend.



only to be a hit amongst the kids, but some of the parents as well. The rain prohibited them from doing a second show, so they grabbed the puppets and handed out invites using the puppets to deliver them.

The weekend was far from over. On the Lord's Day, every church in Fayetteville that participated in the events, was visited by some of the 40 for their morning services. Then everyone came back to the First Church of God to put on a community picnic, filled with great food, good music, testimonies, and Jesus. The locals filled the room, and their presence was enjoyable. There was music that was played during the picnic, but it was not all done by those who traveled from all over. There was a chorus of local girls whose voices rang out in harmony the name of Jesus and an older man and his guitar, singing about God's love and mercy. Finally, the Cleveland Institute of Music students performed not one, but two concerts in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Lord did amazing things that weekend. He revived the weary, comforted the poor, strengthened the weak, and spread His love. The churches were very encouraged and thankful that these 40 were willing to sacrifice their weekend to come and help them out. They even wanted them to return next year. Praise the Lord for His moving and praise Him for his work in Fayetteville, West Virginia!

Josh Watkins, Cleveland



Serving Sisters Conference

Message Two Notes

This morning I talked about the problems and hard life a sister can have, but if used properly, your life can be very, very meaningful. Now we come to the situation of the local churches. The local churches in this area are a bit messy, but at least those who remain are still standing firm for what God is after. It is worth having a simple evaluation of our practice and the riches and blessings we have lost or won.

God has given us Himself, Christ and, through Christ, He has produced the church. The church is the city built upon the hill, the testimony of the Lord, which focuses on two things: the saints (who are the center of the church life, the most crucial constitution) and people (for which the church exists). Yes, we need to know truth and life, but we can never get away from these two things. Beside God and Christ, who accomplished and produced everything, the most crucial thing in the universe is the church, constituted with the saints. This makes the saints the most crucial element in God's economy. The saints are the constituents of the church. The saints cannot be treated as secondary or inconsequential. Without the saints, nothing is real. When the saints are healthy, people are blessed. We may think the meetings, the truths, the ministering, etc. are crucial (and they are) but what the Lord cares most about are each one of us and those believers beside us. Thus each one of us is crucial. We should never do anything that damages the saints or is unprofitable to them. If you have this understanding, you are very blessed.

On behalf of the saints, God has given gifts – apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd and teachers – for the perfecting of the saints (Eph. 4:11-12). The Bible doesn't talk about meetings or services; it talks about the perfecting of the saints, who are most important. Therefore the sisters should be able to declare to the elders, "You exist for my profit." What they do should be for the profit of the saints. Anything they do against this principle should be resisted.

Truth, life, light and so on are developed for the sake of the saints. You should never tell people “be in the teaching of life,” but rather, “become more precious.” The healthy family treats all the children just as crucial or more crucial than the parents. It doesn’t matter how “retarded” one child seems when compared to others. The healthy family does not boast in the brighter ones alone, but treats each child as being equally important. Nothing replaces the perfecting of the saints, regardless of their capacity. The gifts are for all the saints. Each saint is most crucial.

For this perfecting, we have settings: meetings, pursuing, etc., or what we call “church life.” We have a good setting, but remember that no message, etc., is for a message, etc. All these things are for the development and perfecting of the saints; they are not for their own sake.

I am blessed to have been under Witness Lee’s ministering for 44 years. I have to testify that not many can expound the Bible as he was able to, and not many are able to bring others to love the Lord and commit themselves to Him as he was. I am puzzled as to why we seem to produce so much seniority among us, and yet so few ministries. For instance, when I visited a certain group of serving ones who had come out from the unhealthy situation, many could boast in what they saw was wrong, but no one seemed able to speak what was right. (Everyone knows Satan is wrong... but Satan is still Satan!) Those who serve should have something from the Lord that they know is positively for the building up of the church and that will speed the day of His coming. This doesn’t mean these brothers aren’t busy, but even if someone is successful in touching people, where do you put the fish you gain out of the river? If you have no pond to nurture them in, why should you take them in? We may be able to get people, but we should have a container to raise them up in. Do we have a suitable place to bring contacts into so they can go on? The Lord has not raised us up merely to be preachers, but to serve Him according to what He is after. Our desire is not to be welcomed by people or successful in gaining numbers. Having been helped by such a great servant of the Lord as Witness Lee, who was so rich in the truth and able to help so many love and serve the Lord, why have we arrived at where we are today? We need to study why we are where we are today. Many among us are the beneficiaries of his ministry, and these qualities he possessed are the reason we remain today in the church life, in spite of whatever may have taken place. If we can say we are able to stand for the Lord today, we owe much of that to Brother Lee.

So, where does our problem lie? We have such good saints, and have benefited from such a good servant of the Lord. Many other





gifts have been given to us as well, so what is the reason for the current depression? We know exactly what we ought to be doing, and this is the very reason we are in trouble today. Everything the brothers think they ought to be doing is destroying what the Spirit is trying to do. This is why we are where we are today. Since Brother Lee passed, a few, by the Lord's ministry, have been raised up. If more brothers had been operating healthily, however, I don't believe a publishing house could have ended up doing so much damage.

How is it that so many among us, after being helped to love the Lord, have become so dormant? We talk about transformation and the developing operations, but among us, where can we see those who have development of ministry? So many get caught with "serving" and advance in the place their seat occupies in the meeting. Those who sit in the front row are those who have "made it". Those on top care to handle meetings, to lead, to give orders, and to decide others' fate and judge their hopefulness.... God, Christ and the saints disappear. The saints merely become part of the meetings. You ask these leaders how the saints are and their answer is, "The meetings are fine," rather than "The saints are fine." The saints may even be used as the means to do things in the church life. The saints should never be used to try something the leaders want to do; it is the saints themselves who should be the focus of the efforts of the leading ones.

Once someone achieves the first seat in the meetings he may feel he has made it, and determines that the meetings and messages and so on must be good. That person develops the psychology that the saints are his, and the saints also develop the psychology that they are his. When this kind of leader/follower relationship develops God, Christ and the saints disappear. What should you get after being in the church life year after year? You should get Christ. If you feel you deserve to get anything else, you should get "out". God has a plan, accomplished by Christ, to produce the church, which is made up of the saints. If the saints are healthy they become a lampstand, a city set upon the hill, and then others are able to see something that becomes the Lord's testimony.

We have to learn submission. Sisters, though, should tell their husbands, "If you don't die for me, why should I submit to you? The Lord died for us." The husbands have to love their wives like this before the husbands talk about their wives' subjection. The same goes for the saints and the elders!

Those who arrive at the "top" in the way of arriving at a position, arrive at the end of their growth. Suppose, rather than

arriving at the “top,” you become the one who serves all? The healthy leader serves at the “bottom”. If the leading ones serve like this, many will get saved and receive the real help. The youngest in a family is actually the biggest in the family in terms of attention. He who wants to be first must learn to be last. Often what we mean when we say we are fellowshiping about someone, however, is that we are determining their fate. We are happy when the meetings are good or when a brother ministers well. When we practice something so seemingly healthy, however, there MAY be exclusiveness. The meetings may seem good, but how about the saints?

A servant of the Lord always struggles for something new. For instance, the Lord has recently provided me a lot of light on Matthew and Ephesians. While I was considering this new light, the Lord asked me if I was happy. I was happy because the Lord gave something to me. Then, however, the Lord asked me, “How about the saints? Are the saints happy?” I can give hundreds of messages on these books, but I should not use the saints for my ministry; I should use my ministry for the saints. I should not get the saints together just because I have something new. God cares about the saints. When the saints are healthy, the church life is filled with divine attributes manifested through human virtues. Others will see something marvelous as a city set upon a hill. Yet when we are caught in the culture of “where am I now in the church life hierarchy?” the structure of the church life displaces the vitality of the church life.

Our leading ones tend to go in one of two directions: either we keep what we have or we try something new. To me, to do something wrong or make mistakes is better than to die. But when we want to try something new, we must keep the basic things such as, “Is this really for the profit of the saints?”

Suppose a certain church life can boast of a thousand saints, making the leading ones there really something. It is good to have increase, but not increase for increase’ sake. The Lord’s concern is to take care of the sheep who is lost rather than the other 99 who are not. When the Lord comes to the real thing (other than thirty, sixty, one hundredfold) it can mean decrease rather than increase! Leave the 99? Go for the one who is lost? What is this? Yet this is real. Are we willing to leave all for that one lost sheep? When we are number oriented, that “one” is let go for the 99 because we are happy with the 99. Just like the Pharisees, we may care for what is on the outside rather than the actual situation of what is on the inside.





Too often when we think of serving, we think of doing something. The Lord's view, however, is to treasure the saints you are with. If we are caught with numbers and situations and how good the meetings are, then something is wrong. The Lord calls us a "little flock". No matter how big, we are a little flock. The Lord will not say, "I love the Roman Catholic Church because its membership is by far the largest." To become number-oriented rather than individual-oriented indicates a serious problem. A church with loving and faithful elders will not be a dying church. Sometimes a church suffers because it has too many meetings.

The Bible mentions three types of meetings: The Lord's table, gathering to pray to exercise the Lord's government, and gatherings in the homes for fruit-bearing.

The home meetings are sometimes too scheduled, rather than being sweetly informal where we really help one another. If new ones come, we preach the gospel; if not, we can fellowship together. Too often we destroy what is going well by our planning. We have dinner with our children because we enjoy being with our children, not because we want to teach them something! At least once a week, can we merely be with the saints for no other reason than they are saints? May we open our homes for this. If we feel inspired to read something or sing something, we may do so, but such a time should not be something planned out.

(When we say the saints, we mean the church; and when we say the church, we mean the saints. This should be our understanding.)

I particularly encourage you to go and visit someone. Bring some extra tea along. That person will open to you. Just enjoy his or her presence; that is good enough. Then, if the Lord has mercy, see that person more often. In principle they will ask you the reason for your happiness or hope. Then, in humility, you should be able to say something. They will discover someone cares for them and they will open. They will tell you what is in their heart, and they may come into the church life. That kind of service to others is of high value; much higher than just giving a message for a message's sake. People need someone to show them that they are loved.

For us to have a revival, we need only to drop our "top down" view and insure that all the saints know that they are loved. I am in favor of having a rich message on the Lord's day, and a rich Lord's table meeting. We should also come together to pray, for this gathering is the key to the Lord's move and the sign of a healthy church life. We should also have OUR meetings in our homes.

We should not become “bureacratiholics”. The elders should spend time with the saints, just as parents should spend time with their children. Unfortunately, what the Lord sees when He looks at the church and what we see may be very different. We see meetings; He sees people.

We appreciate the gifts the Lord has given us for our perfecting, and we appreciate the truth and life they have imparted to us, and how they have helped us to love the Lord. Unfortunately, however, we may not be focused upon the saints as much as we are focused upon the things done WITH those saints. Therefore we need to make sure we are visiting the saints and opening our homes to them. The warmness in the church life is what attracts people more than anything else such as what instruments we use in the meetings or what songs we choose for the meetings. We don't need to have so many meetings, but we all should have one that is OURS, which may include a few other saints coming together with us.

Love gains people. Such an atmosphere attracts others. In this kind of atmosphere we can speak something of the gospel to others. May we develop this kind of church life in the coming months. Over time, people will come to Jesus for they will see a group of people so happy and genuine and caring with no motive other than their well-being.

Titus Chu December 11, 2009 PM Ashland Woods (Sullivan, OH)





News from Uganda

This last fall, Debbie and I were privileged to visit the dear saints in Uganda. I arrived in August, and was joined by my wife in October. Along with joining the local brothers in their gospel and shepherding, much time was spent in procuring a more adequate base for the church life in Kampala. Previously, the brothers rented a small auditorium on the Makerere University campus for their Lord's Day gathering, and used the workers apartment living room for the various other meetings throughout the week. This was a good start, but their growth and development called for a more suitable home base for the future. Thankfully, after much searching and a number of dead ends, the Lord answered our prayers. We found a cooperative owner, who was in the midst of building a suitable structure to house workers, with enough vacant land to erect a large meeting tent. Eventually, we worked out a five year lease agreement, backed in part by your care from around the Great Lakes, to continue supporting the Lord's work in Uganda. This, along with discipleship from visiting co-workers, we hope will manifest in a bright testimony in Kampala, and eventually servant leaders sent to outlying regions.

Many of us joyfully joined in the work to build a retaining wall, level the ground for a tent, spread sand, set pavers for the tent floor, and pour foundation pads for the poles. So, we enjoyed lots of hands on hoe and shovel work, some even in their bare feet! It was the Ugandan saints first experience of the this type of church labor together, and the time was sweet.

I was really happy for Debbie's arrival. She labored with the sisters everyday, visiting young ones, helping at the site, learning the details of going to the market, and of course lots of cooking and hospitality. I don't think we ever ate a dinner alone. The Ugandans are all so open, giving, and sharing, so she blent right in.

On the heels of our visit, Vern Yoder visited, followed by Del Martin. They helped follow up on the building details, and of course helped much in shepherding, teaching, and setting the course for the full timers' personal labor and church service. So now, in Kampala, we have a new tent that seats approximately 280, a two stall pit latrine with a sink and running water, and a roomy, three unit apartment building to house workers and host many small gatherings. This will provide a base for a homey church life, with lots of traffic, hospitality, and gospel opportunity.

In my visits, I hope to be a little wine, splashed on the sacrifice and service of their faith. It is their sacrifice and their service which is inspiring to us. Amidst the trials and tribulation so common to Africa, Christ is calling fellow servants by His own virtue and grace, inspired by His purpose. They realize it is Christ and the church that answers the cry around them. And this is not a slogan, but the life of Jesus lived out in fellowship and community, "the church as a city set on a hill".

"Lord, may Your kingdom come!"

For His glory,
R. Mann



(more photos may be found on inside front cover)



Serving Sisters Conference

Message Three Notes

As believers we experience something corporately and something individually. If we are not clear on the corporate, or church aspect, our individual experience will never be right, and if we are not clear about the individual part, our church part will only be something of a program to us. In fact, our church life may have become a “hat producing” center. When we focus on whatever “hat” we wear, our church life becomes conformed to the activity rather than Christ. It is easy for elders to say to those who disagree with them “You are in the flesh” and put the “disobedient” hat on them. The brothers eventually may put that hat on the sisters. Young people should have the freedom to make mistakes, yet the leading ones may label the young people as rebellious. In principle, we should always respect the leading ones, yet when the leading ones frustrate what the Lord may be allowing, the result is often that the saints stop doing anything other than going along with whatever program the elders have set up.

What is the Lord after? The saints. How does the Lord work for the saints? Through the ministries of the gifts. In this matter the setting is crucial.

The reason a congregation may seem dead is because no one dares to be alive, since it is less troublesome to act as though we are dead even when we really aren't. We have patterns established for us in the Word, such as the assembling of ourselves together. But even though we have a meeting, the Lord and the reality of the saints may be gone because the focus is only on whether the meeting is “good”. We must realize that the corporate side can only be healthy when the saints are individually healthy. If our setting is too strong, however, the corporate side kills the individual side and many capable saints become mere church goers. The apostles must help us out of such a thing, yet as they labor towards this end whatever the leaders do in response can kill the saints instead of enlivening them. Can we say we are closely following the Lord and the truth rather than “We are closely following the ministry?” When we use a slogan like this as a cover-up, we mask our deficiency

rather than admitting it. If we cannot admit our true situation, how can we hope to be restored to what is real? We must be able to say, “We have Christ! We are burdened with something the Lord has revealed and committed to us.” Those who end up saying “I follow the ministry closely” are able to deflect everything and yet claim association. The church is a corporate testimony produced by the healthy individual saints. This is just like a family. The family’s testimony is produced by the healthiness of the individuals within that family.

Whether or not the church is heavenly is based on whether the individuals within it are heavenly. If the individuals are not experiencing life or loving the Lord, there is no testimony. The corporate testimony is produced by the individual testimonies of the saints within the church life. The testimony the Lord is after is not produced by how well the leader is doing. The testimony is produced by how well the entire household, which is based upon how each individual, is doing. If all the individuals are pursuing and loving Christ, the testimony of that church will be healthy. This is what must be nurtured. In the USA, however, people think of things in terms of mass production. In such a culture people really don’t know what it is to be individuals. In order to gain what the Lord is after, we have to break through a culture that values such things as mega-churches.

Can we even say that in our church life SOME individuals are OK, if we cannot say ALL are OK? As long as SOME are OK, there is hope. Each one of us should desire to be healthy. We should each endeavor to pray, sing hymns, function, care for others, and preach the gospel. It is due to this kind of situation among the individuals that the church life becomes healthy. Since the Lord has not come back yet, we know that, firstly, there is no such spiritual man able to walk with the Lord, and secondly, that no one local church is yet able to bear the testimony of the Lord.

Perhaps none of us can afford to be exposed to examination, but that does not mean we cannot be healthy enough to exercise for the profit of the church life. Healthiness is a comparative matter. I may appear overweight in some countries, but not when compared to Americans! We have to learn to be healthy by loving the brothers and exercising a healthy spiritual life before the Lord. This is what causes the testimony of the church to be healthy. If even a fraction of the saints learn to pursue in this way, the entire testimony becomes more healthy. On the other hand, how can the testimony be healthy when 98 percent of the saints do not even come to the meetings on time?





Saints in many local churches tell me that they cannot afford to preach the gospel because the constituents of the church life, the saints, are not healthy. There is nothing to contain the new ones; there are none who are able to care for them. A healthy testimony has the ability to draw people and the capacity to care for them.

The church can never be prevailing if the saints are not healthy. Since we have the Lord, we have the way (John 14:6). If we struggle to be healthy the church will become healthy for the testimony of the church is produced through the healthiness of the individual saints. Likewise, the growth and maturity of the church corporately comes through the healthiness and growth of the individual saints. If a church is mature, it is due to the fact that individuals within it have grown unto maturity. This is a hard thing, for the pattern produced in the church life in order to follow the direction of God through the perfecting of the gifts often ends up killing the saints. Patterns can cause us to become patterned. We may begin with freshness and joy, but as any pattern is perpetuated it becomes something of requirement and what must be done. While there are certain things that must be, such as preparing food for our families, these things do not need to become patterned! We don't have to eat the same thing every meal. But if it is all that is provided, those who eat will have no other choice but to eat it, even though everyone knows something is wrong. When we follow a pattern, this is what happens. The vitality goes out of the meetings, like eating canned spaghetti day after day. A true mother will endeavor to produce the best meals for her family regardless of how exhausted or incapable she may feel. The growth of the individuals in the church life comes through the growth and exercise of the parents.

When you become responsible for others you have no choice but to mature. When you get married, you enter into a new level of maturity, and when you become a parent you mature even further. A healthy family cannot be produced when the parents only love themselves. That is no different than when a brother complains, "I have given myself to this for thirty years and what have I gotten for it?" We are only here to gain Christ, and you can gain Christ regardless how many "hats" you have put on (or have been forced to wear). As we grow, many others can grow. By our maturity, many others can become mature. Therefore we need to grow. As we grow, others will grow with us. (As the seeker in the Song of Songs says, "Draw me, WE will run after You.")

The testimony that produces fruit also is produced by the healthiness of the individual saints. This is why I have become leery to encourage various ways of preaching the gospel, such as using Thanksgiving to invite others, etc. The gospel is not an activity; the gospel is a living. People may enjoy a good time at gospel events, but such events do not typically produce fruit. People may remember the atmosphere of a gospel meeting, but fruit comes when some saints are simply flowing out life. Sisters are often those able to release love and show genuine concern to others.

Therefore you should be healthy, you should grow, and you should outflow life. When others touch you, they should touch life. You should develop your operation. If you practice these four things the church where you are will be healthy. If the church where you are is weak it is because YOU are weak. You must blame yourself for the church's weakness, just as you may claim your church's healthiness has much to do with your healthiness!

Titus Chu December 12, 2009 AM Ashland Woods (Sullivan, OH)



Practical Fellowship on Serving as a Married Couple

During the Serving Sisters Conference, Keith and Tina Miller shared some things they learned about serving together while in Uganda. Here is a selection:



Keith: The best thing you can do and the happiest you will ever be in your life is when you are taking care of things that matter to God. People matter to God (John 3:16)! Isn't it a joy if you can bring somebody to know Christ? The reason it is such a joy is you did something for someone that isn't just going to last for a period of time; you changed the eternal destiny in someone's life. This is why we went to Africa.

Our feeling was to change the eternal destiny of the best and brightest, the young people there, and let them continue the evangelism of that country and bring the church. The church is the hope of the world. Tina and I both share this vision and belief. We see the church as the hope of the world. This is the background.

We feel we are effective as a team together. You can do something as an individual. You can be the most talented person. But we are not all-inclusive. Even the most capable person cannot do all things. You must have a counterpart; a match; somebody who shares the same passion and vision you have of what God can do. That is how we labored over there.



Tina: We as sisters may appreciate the brothers' portion and despise our own. The Lord, however, needs the sisters' fineness and qualities of heart. He needs us to cooperate with the brothers and He needs us as much as the brothers. Keith loves to go out to preach the gospel. I, on the other hand, just want to hide! I do love to cook and to feed people, however. We really worked well together that way, and we learned to operate together as a team to care for people. Eventually we saw the Lord do a lot.



Keith: It is really important to understand who you are and also to understand who your spouse is. If you don't do this, you may put a standard on the other person that is not right. You have to take a good look at who you are married to and appreciate and honor and understand and try to bring out and develop the portion that is precious there. I was able to see in my wife a gift and abilities I don't have. I also understood what she couldn't do and her weaknesses, so I tried to cover that and not put her in those places that might cause her to feel uncomfortable. I think she had to do the same for me also.

Tina: To communicate with one another is very important. We did learn to listen to one another more and to pay attention. We came to appreciate the gift in one another. I appreciated the wisdom God gave Keith. I learned to bounce a lot of things off of him, and trusted his wisdom and feeling. He also could often receive things I saw.



Keith: The matter of listening is very big. Tina has told me that women want to be heard, and one of her biggest frustrations is when I don't seem to hear what she is saying. It isn't a matter of not listening necessarily, but of being interested. If the husband doesn't pay attention and listen so that he hears what his wife is seeing, he may miss something the Lord is showing her. The wife often sees things from an angle the husband has not realized. She is often aware of situations I am not aware of....If people can see you working together, they should realize that when they talk to one of you, they are talking to both of you.

On the matter of opening our home; I feel that was the biggest factor for us. There has to be an openness to allow people to come in to mess up your life. Don't be afraid of people coming in and breaking your stuff and ruining your house. Let them do it! What are we holding onto anyway? We had hundreds of people over to our house for meals. Many, we knew, only came because they wanted to eat the food Tina prepared. Tina would make it with love and we fed people. What's so bad about that? And eventually many of them got "sparked". We never told anyone, "You only get one more meal, and if you don't turn to Jesus by then, you're out of here!" Our homes need to be open to love people in this way.



Tina: Even before we had furniture we began to feed people. On Saturday nights we would have everyone over and I would make two pots of chili and cornbread. We knew the students didn't eat well and were just tired of their daily subsistence diet, so we were happy to feed them. We knew, while they were there, that they would hear something from the Word of God, and it is the Word that changes people's hearts....We just love the brothers and sisters there; they are so sweet. Their testimony was, "Nobody is teaching us the Bible here like you are. Nobody is teaching us how to love the Bible." We're known as the people who teach the Bible. That's our testimony on campus.

Keith: As you get involved in people's lives, there is a need of counseling as well, and helping in practical matters. It is not a matter of you making them the way you want them, but you really want to see them better their own lives....If you love them, then you have to get involved in the nitty gritty of their lives. As a brother you can't do everything. I could preach the gospel, but I couldn't shepherd a sister. And neither could I put that on Tina and make her feel that she had to do it. But when she met people she would get burdened for them and I supported her...



Tina: There are so many practical things that come up, and we were there. Just as with your own physical children, you have to get involved with the lives of those you are caring for.

Inciting The Talented Members

Scripture reading: 1 Cor. 12:4; Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7; Matt. 25:14-18, 27

Every human being should wonder, "What is the meaning of my life?" I am 65, and people say I should retire. That's OK, but life should never be that we give up at a certain time and sit back and do nothing. From the beginning to the end we were created with a purpose in view. The most important thing a man or woman can ask themselves is, "Why am I here?"

God created each one of us with a particular intention, and this intention has been revealed in the Bible. In Genesis 1:26 we see that God created us in His image and after His likeness so that we might rule together with Him over the earth. This is developed through the Old Testament until He gained a people called Israel. That was a picture of what God wanted. He doesn't just want to have six billion people on the earth; He wants a people for His possession. He wants a people who will love Him, seek Him, and eventually be according to what He desires.

Eventually the Lord Jesus came. God entered into humanity.

This is a season of shopping. Some people have a bumper sticker on their cars that says, "Born to shop". Is that how someone would define themselves? Or even to gain a Nobel Prize? Is that even a high enough goal? The purpose of our life must be according to what God desires. That should be the standard.

Jesus lived a life that qualified Him to become the Lamb of God without spot or blemish who could die on the cross on behalf of each one of us. The Lord shed His blood to take care of our condition, to purchase us back from the demand of the Law so we might belong to God. It wasn't so we could go to heaven, but so we could be brought back to the original intention of why we were born, why at a given point in time each one of us were born, that we could belong to God for what He desires. So we receive not just forgiveness of sins... we were born again, we received the life of God! We became the children of God.

Our being saved is not merely that we might live a blessed life. I am for all the good things the Christian life affords man, but the higher vision that the Lord desires is that we would realize why we are a Christian, and why we were set from our mother's womb at a certain time? Why are we believers?

Some believers, after many years, are only able to say, "Thank God that I am saved!" I have known believers like this who, after many years, displayed very little spiritual growth. This caused me to ask myself, "Why am I a believer?" It is good I have been brought to the Lord, but what is it the Lord desires of me? As I read the Bible, I began to realize things weren't as simple as I thought. The Lord in Luke 15 is seeking us, sweeping, that we would receive His salvation. He is also, however, looking for those who would seek Him and what He desires!

Within me that seeking is still going on. I am not satisfied just to be a believer, or to have eternal life and forgiveness. Why am I here? Why has He put a seeking within my heart, regardless of how variable my moods seem? He is seeking for those who would work and labor together with Him to fulfill what He desires.

In Matthew 13:45-46 we see that the Lord has sold everything to purchase a treasure. You may ask, Since He has already purchased this treasure, what more is there to do? He is looking for believer after believer to be perfected and grow and correspond to Him so that they might be one with Him for what He is doing.

Furthermore, I didn't have to do anything to get saved. Why should I have to do anything now? Yet no matter how fallen my concept is, the divine life within me will not let me go!

As believers, every one of us has been gifted by the Holy Spirit. Not only do we have the eternal, divine and uncreated life of God; we also have a gift the Lord has given specifically to us to profit the Body of Christ. That treasure, that pearl of Matthew 13 is actually the Lord's people, His Body that He wants us to participate in so that it might be made complete.

This may seem like a word of righteousness to some, rather than a word of grace. Grace is a matter of everything being freely given, with little required on our part. The word of righteousness tells you that you just can't sit back and be a spectator.

When I was younger I never liked to watch anything; I always wanted to play it. As believers we aren't here to spectate; we are here to participate. We are here to enter into the labor together with Jesus

Christ. There are distinctions of gift, but the same Spirit! We have been deceived by the whole sphere of Christendom that we are to sit in a chair and listen to a message. How poor that is! We need to hear something, but that is not our life! We need to participate with Jesus Christ to complete what He has done.

Paul said, "I need to fill up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His Body." The gifted members are not here to replace the other members; the gifted members are here to incite all the members to function. They are here to make us feel, "I can be in the game too!" Maybe I cannot give a message, but there is something in me that is for you as to what Christ is desiring to do in you, to incite you. In Hebrews we read that we are to incite one another to love and good works. What are these good works for? To profit many others.

These good works may never be seen by others. They are not for you to gain recognition for yourself. Some are happy to participate if it will be seen, but to do something unseen that the Lord might build up His Body, how glorious that is!

We have all received a gift according to grace. The Lord has come to us to cause us to have something unique and special. That grace was not given to us that we might squander it, but that we might function and grow!

For a human to achieve peak performance in their particular field, he or she needs to dedicate a certain amount of practice. As a member of the Body, we each have received grace according to the size or measure of who we are. Whatever we have been given, it is that we might labor together with Him. In Matthew 24 we read that the Kingdom, the sphere in which He operates, is likened to a man who calls all His slaves together. We are all His slaves. What the Lord has given is to every member of His Body, born or unborn when He gave this parable. He gave to us all His possessions. In other words, He delivered to us one another! He delivered me to you and you to me. He delivered the Body of Christ to the members in the Body. To each member He delivered something to do with a particular segment of the Body of Christ.

We are the Lord's possession. He purchased us with His own blood, and what He wants us to do is to be effective one toward another. Therefore He gave to each one something called a talent. A talent of silver is 6,000 denarii, or 6000 days of common wage. That is about 16 years of pay! Multiply your salary times sixteen. You should be able to do pretty well by that standard. If you earn about 30,000 dollars a year, that would be about half a million dollars. Too often, when we hear of receiving one talent, we are not very impressed, especially when he hear of others

receiving twice or even five times that much. Yet the amount the Lord has gifted us with is sufficient enough for us to invest so that we might gain a substantial return for Him.

The one with the five gained five, and the one with the two gained two more in this parable. The Master said to these, "Well done, thou good and faithful slave." After our lives on this earth are done, the Lord will ask for an account of our time. I don't like to put people in a corner, so let me apply this to myself. What have I done with what He has invested in me? Has He not given me a gift, and has He not given me grace according to the size of the gift? The Lord gave me something that equals 6000 days worth of wages. What am I doing with it? If someone gave us that much money, we would go to a financial advisor to help us figure out how to invest it.

There are some who squander great amounts. Some who win great lottery amounts are seduced by the age, and they do not behave wisely. How much better if our portion, whatever it is, is invested in the Body of Christ! I am all for having a good life and living healthfully and financially in a sound way. But if that is all I have to bring with me when I meet the Lord, then I will be ashamed. I want to be able to say, "Thank You for stimulating me to invest the little I have to produce a profit for You!"

The Lord wants co-workers, co-laborers. He has given some two and five-talented members to go and stimulate our gifts so that we might go and do business. The profit we desire to see is that the Body has grown and developed because of our investment.

In business, there is so much that goes into managing it. How much more should go into managing the Father's business? You need the multi-talented ones to do what they do to stimulate the involvement of those who feel they are less talented. In Christianity we see that the vast majority of Christ's members do not realize they are called to do business so that they might produce a profit for the Lord. Yet this is what we have been called to do.

I don't like to put a load on people's shoulders, but this load is a different kind of load. In Matthew 11:28 - 30 the Lord tells us, "Come to Me all who labor and are heavy-laden... for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." The Lord has not called us to labor out of our natural ability; He has called us to labor together with Him by being yoked with Him enabling us to bear His burden together. It is not according to what you can do; it is according to what He is able to do in you and you in Him that you might do something with Him that His Body may grow.

In the parable of the talents the one-talented one came to the Lord and said, "I knew you are a hard man; you reap where you did not sow and

you gather where you did not winnow. And I was afraid and went off and hid my talent in the earth. And, Behold, you have what is yours.” That seems better than squandering it! Yet the Master answered, “Evil and slothful slave, you know that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not winnow. Therefore you should have deposited my money with the money changers and when I came I would have recovered what is mine with interest.”

Why did the Lord call this slave evil? It is because of his assessment of the Lord. He realized the Lord was a “hard man,” and therefore he became afraid. That fear is what caused him to bury his talent. We often become fearful and anxious of doing something wrong. My own experience is that I do things wrong habitually and continually. But at least there is some doing that is going on!

The problem is that all we one-talented members seem leery of investing. How do we overcome this? We must first be clear that, as human beings, we should be believers. After we believe, however, we need to ask, “Why am I here as a believer? It is not that you can squander what the Lord has given you because you think you have a free ticket to heaven. You have been given a gift and grace according to that measure. You should ask, “How can that be stimulated so that ultimately a profit is produced for the Lord?”

Many serve full-time, and I appreciate that. But that is not something that is required to invest yourself spiritually in something. What is required is that you seek the Lord and go do something until He returns! If you feel you have to be somebody to do something, that is a lie from the enemy. You need to realize you have a distinct gift and that you need to invest it with others so that eventually there might be a profit for the Lord at His return. Then you will be qualified to enter into the rest of the Lord.

Even though you might be older, it is not over! The best way to go to be with the Lord is to realize that, until the Lord takes you, you have to invest yourself.

We all need to be clear what the Lord has given us, and what the next step for us is. If we don't know, we should ask the Lord. If we are able to say something to someone about the Lord, even briefly, that is a redeeming of the time the Lord has given us. Something is invested in another person. Let the Lord work with you. If you see what He wants, don't look to the gifted ones. Look at what the Lord has given you, and ask Him, “What should I do?” Then, the Lord will have a way to reward you when you see Him, and say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

Paul Neider, January 3, 2010 Cleveland (Jubilee)

"In CHRIST alone..."

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song:
This Cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease.
My Comforter, my All in All...
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe;
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied,
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain.
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine,
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me.
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
'til He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Keith Getty, Stuart Townend



Serving Sisters Conference

Message Four Notes

To have a field.

First you have a healthy relationship with the Lord, appreciate the leadership, and you yourself must have life and love. If you don't have Christ, nothing works. Only if you have Christ can your service have value. Furthermore, you must have a proper appreciation for the leadership. Whoever doesn't know how to appreciate their leaders should probably move away until they find leaders they CAN appreciate. If you feel your leaders are trash, however, you yourself must be garbage.

If you are a person of love and life, then you are serving already. It is not what you do as much as what kind of person you are. How are you with Christ, how are you with the saints and elders in your locality, and how are you with yourself? If you are merely ambitious to serve, that is not adequate. If you are saturated with the Lord and love flows out of you, eventually you ARE serving.

Fourth, how are you with your home? And fifth, if you are married, are you able to work with your spouse? (Even a single saint, however, can open her home to invite sisters and couples. Your residence can become a base.) Finally, you must have a field to develop in the church life.

Are you proper with the Lord, and with the church life leadership? How do you treat your elders? (You don't need to be afraid of them, but you need to love them.) If you are distant with the elders, it is up to you to bridge that gap, not the elders. Learn to appreciate and respect the elders who serve you. Honor them because they are your leaders. Learn to be one with them so that the burden the Lord has given them might be realized.

Learn also to treasure the saints in your locality. We tend to see saints elsewhere in a more positive light than those with us, but this is foolish. We shouldn't be picky. The saints the Lord has put you with are the best saints you will ever find. Don't wish for a M^dme. Guyon, for a few people like that could kill the whole church! Things are from many angles. Perhaps the reason I am not in your locality is because the Lord wants you to survive!

I am so thankful for the saints the Lord has given to be with me. We want the saints with us to be perfect (and we don't expect that we should be perfect). The Lord has measured to us the saints we are with. He knows exactly who to put beside you.

If you only want to have your way, rather than being able to appreciate all the brothers with you, you will not be able to serve well. In the church life, we must learn to say, "Everyone has so much for me to appreciate. In each one I can see the beauty and workmanship of the Lord." If you are this kind of person, you will never be discouraged with the elders or the saints, even though their failures or shortages might become evident. You will be able to treasure what is good about people. Learn to appreciate the elders and treasure the saints who are with you. The ability to appreciate others lays the base of your serving life.

Then, as you have this kind of appreciation, also learn to take care of yourself. No serving is just for serving. Every serving is a part of your being, an operation. The ability to be a mother often does not come out until the children appear. Even those who do not seem capable are able to be mothers due to their love for their children, for they give their lives for their children. It is normal to love your children and pour out for them, for they are part of your life. If you know how to properly take care of your person, serving will come naturally as an outflow of your life, in love. It will not be abnormal for you to sacrifice yourself for others if your person is right. If you are a person of life and love, such a service spontaneously issues forth. Such an outflow of life and love among the brothers and sisters should characterize the church life.

You have to be proper with the Lord and with the church, but most of all you have to be proper with yourself. If you are filled with Christ, and enjoy Christ to the place that He is life to you and expressed in you as love, you ARE a serving one. The Lord doesn't hire people or ask for volunteers. He only operates through Himself. You don't have to TRY to be a serving one; you ARE a serving one. If you are a person of life and love, people will like to come to you and be with you, for with you they receive life and know they are loved.

If these things are healthy (being fresh in the Lord's presence, proper in the church life and especially toward those who serve you, treasuring the saints beside you, and treasuring yourself) everything becomes simple. If these things are not with you, you will see that things do not work out, for your person is what counts. If others can sense that the Lord is near them when you are near them, isn't that serving? That is much better than any program!





Then, treasure your home. Make a source to produce warmth. Let others invade your home. This may seem rude, but isn't this how it is with those of your own family? People should feel at home when they come to your place. Tell others, "Make yourself at home," and practice that. Others should feel they can help themselves.

A brother who served on a campus showed me how he treated the freshmen who came to his house. His refrigerator was well-stocked, and he told students they could come over at any time and eat whatever they wanted. Probably no one would feel so free, but he made them feel welcome and warm.

When we are with others, they should feel that we care for them, not that we are AFTER them. We should be after their salvation and what is best for them. The Lord hates ulterior motives. We should do what we do out of love. Others deserve our service simply because they are children of God. In the church life, I hope many would exercise a watchfulness and concern over others.

I like the testimony of a brother who testified he knew that a certain group of people were coming to their dinners just for the food. That didn't matter to this brother. One night, a few of these people began to touch the Lord. Learn to use your home generously. If you don't have anyone to invite, tell a young brother to invite some of his friends over. Young people have a lot of friends, and they are always looking for a place to eat. Whether they believe or not, don't worry about it. They may not believe now, but at a certain point they may remember how they heard about Jesus at that dinner.

Grow up with other saints in love. Learn to call up others and read something together. Don't make an issue or raise up a faction in the church life, but have some tea with another sister. Your house will become very valuable in the church life.

Titus Chu December 12, 2009 PM Ashland Woods (Sullivan, OH)

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Monday, 05 October 2009

The Church: Better Off without Christianity?

First, I had better define my terms! By the **Church** I mean the biblical definition of that entity that embodies all genuine believers in Christ. By **Christianity** I mean the conglomeration of organizations and structures that have grown up around these believers throughout the ages. Many assume the two terms are equated somehow, but I feel that is a sad mistake. What if we all could shed the "churches" (so-called) and other associations and simply return to living and meeting wherever we lived only as fellow-Christians? Such a situation would, after all, match the blueprint of truth found in the Bible.



In the divisive and sectarian situation found in Christianity, we find Christian denominations *competing for members*. "Come meet with US! (instead of *them*)" There appears to be a lot of gospel activity, but little real coordination is possible when the Christian leaders within each town operate separately from one another. Redundancy reigns! The result is woefully ineffective when compared to what could happen if we could act together as a unified whole.

Imagine how beneficial it would be if all the Christian youth in a city could be together rather than isolated from one another within their "churches"! Consider the power of the gospel within a community if all believers were actually one, rather than just in theory. Present-day Christianity makes sure the "church invisible" *stays* covered up. In the New Testament, we see believers identified simply as "the church in Ephesus," "the church in Jerusalem," "the church in Antioch," and so on. Couldn't we, *shoudn't* we, return to this practice today?

The Body of Christ has become dismembered to the point that believers don't know their own brothers or sisters who live on the same *street*! Personally, I view the present situation as a triumph of the enemy, since he has caused so many Christians to break the bond of Christian unity over matters such as practice and minor doctrines, rather than demonstrating how Christ's grace is sufficient for ALL things (Ephesians 4:3-6; Philippians 4:13). Through present-day Christianity, the door has been opened to accommodate endless division in the Body of Christ, something Paul condemned (1 Corinthians 1:11-13).

I find the statement tragic that urges believers to go to the church of their *choice*, as though God has more than one church, or that He Himself has no say in the matter! After we die, I am pretty sure no one will be known as a Baptist, a Presbyterian, a Lutheran, a Catholic, and so on. Why maintain these distinctions now?

It may seem the present-day structure of Christianity has become too strong for the Body of Christ to overcome, but by simply stepping away from of the various man-made circles, wouldn't we find ourselves joined together again in the one unique circle that Christ created when He died on the cross? His death and resurrection were sufficient to produce the Church, and His death and resurrection remain sufficient for its unity.

Thus, in my view, the only way the church can regain its unity is through the complete dissolution of present-day Christianity by means of non-participation in it. I don't think anyone should be afraid that the Christian witness would disappear. Instead, the Body of Christ would be able to finally manifest itself to the world.

Do people care more for their traditions and being disagreeable than they care about John 17:21?

10:21 AM - 653 Views - 39 ePrags - 77 Comments

Introduction

In the last few years many have been re-examining our stand and many of the things we once took for granted, myself included.

Since we haven't had any articles from other writers on this matter for some time, I would like to give a summary of what I have derived from my own reading of the various brothers who have written or spoken about it, as well as whatever else has presented itself as relevant. Perhaps it will be helpful to stir further discussion and fellowship. (I didn't choose the title "Heretofore" in reference to anything that may be actually taking place, but merely to place the time-frame at the present, "as of now".)

The first section is a brief survey of our heritage heretofore as regarding the practice of the church life in particular.

The second section represents what answers to my own questions have heretofore persuaded me to take the way we have taken in the churches as to the local ground, etc., and its impact on how we have viewed other Christian groups.

I think many who have been among us for a certain period of time would recognize these matters as aspects of our heritage.

Since so many are considering how to go forward, it may be profitable to review the pertinent things that have heretofore regulated our practice in the local churches. I hope in particular that some of the generation that are the "children of the dream" might take the time to dig further into what is only touched upon here.

I have only used the amount of space that was available after all the other articles were placed, but I am not sure that any more space was necessary.

I trust that this kind of exercise among us is safe. I only seek to provide some further means to examine the truth and ourselves within the context of whatever light might be received in the process.

John Berglund

A PARTICULAR HERITAGE

HERETOFORE our stand has been that the Bible is the standard for our truth and practice. As Watchman Nee has been quoted saying, “The Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure word of the Bible even if men oppose; and if it is not the word of the Bible we could never agree even if everyone else approved of it.” (*I must include this because it covers so much of what cannot be covered in such a short space on the topic of why we practice as we do.*)

HERETOFORE we identified with Martin Luther when he took his stand against the Roman “Catholic” Church by claiming we are justified by faith in Christ alone, and that the individual believer must be guided by Scripture and reason rather than the decrees of any institution.

HERETOFORE we admired the sacrifice made by the Anabaptists under such men as George Blaurock and Felix Manz as they came under persecution for seeking to live according to the truth in the Word, thus becoming the first congregations after the Reformation that began to meet independently of both the Roman “Catholic” Church and the state churches.

HERETOFORE we have claimed as part of our heritage the experience of the Spirit that came upon the uniting of Christians from differing backgrounds at a place called Herrnhut, where Count Zinzendorf and Christian David were instrumental in bringing about One Brotherhood (*Unitas Fratrum*). We have recognized that the Spiritual revival they experienced was due to their practical experience of oneness (Psalm 133). We have also recognized the wealth of gospel activity that flowed from that experience among that group known as the Moravians.

HERETOFORE we identified with a small group of believers in Ireland who dropped their various backgrounds to meet together simply as believers. We agreed with their determination that **all** believers are priests who should each function according to ability, and thus rejected the clergy-laity system. We also acknowledged their view that the leadership over a local assembly is carried out by a group of elders, and that there can only be one eldership in a city. (We rejected what led to their downfall: that each local assembly be required to judge issues in other local assemblies and then be accepted or rejected based on these judgments.) John Nelson Darby was a key figure in both the positive and negative developments of this group known as the Plymouth Brethren, to whom we have owed much.

(Perhaps others such as John Glass and Robert and James Haldane, who predated John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren, could be included here as well, as they established what today we would call local churches.)

HERETOFORE we have acknowledged the great debt we owe to Watchman Nee, who, applying principles taught by such persons as T. Austin-Sparks and Darby, determined that based on the blueprint set out in NT practice and due to the fact the Body of Christ is one, there should only be one church in a city if the church as the Body of Christ is to be testified. Watchman Nee saw that the recovery required was a recovery of oneness, and modeled this on the type of the OT return from captivity to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. He taught that the testimony of the local church was particularly a testimony of oneness rather than of holiness, etc. (Besides these, of course, we also have gained from his ministry such things as our emphasis upon the human spirit, the “organic” nature of salvation, a soberness regarding the coming age, and the significance of the cross, which he likewise drew from others such as Robert Govett, Mary McDonough and Jessie Penn-Lewis.)

HERETOFORE we have also practiced the church life along the lines introduced in this country by Witness Lee, Watchman Nee’s coworker, established upon the pattern developed in the Far East by Watchman Nee. This practice includes the outright rejection of the way of Christianity as something that condones, embodies, and promotes division in the Body of Christ. The main aspect of our heritage is seen as a recovery of the experience of a church life that practices oneness by receiving all believers that the Lord has placed in a locality and whose leadership is responsible to follow the Holy Spirit rather than human institution. The biblical unit of practice is the city: no larger, no smaller. It is in this setting, where God chooses our placement and associations rather than ourselves, that Christ can best build His church.

It is hard to take a stand when the cost is sometimes the misunderstanding and alienation of others, as well as comparative lack of resources. Many in the past have taken a stand to follow Christ at His Word, and it was because of the price they paid that they experienced the Lord so richly. The postmodern mentality is under the influence of cultural relativism (that is, that no group is better or worse than any other), and many of our young people may be “turned off” by what they have seen others go through, but it is the Word that must determine our stance. And, since our present culture often paints persons who practice the Bible as “haters,” it may be difficult for young people under its influence to embrace the Bible wholeheartedly. For myself, while I do not want my life to go to waste; I am more concerned that I might miss something of Christ in this lifetime that I might have otherwise known, and that I might miss being useful to Him for accomplishing what He is after. May the Lord continue to lead us in His mercy, and cover our continued seeking **together**. - J.B.

IN APPLICATION

(As explained on page 38, the following are the reasoned, typical answers to questions that some have raised or might raise, produced from what has heretofore been “delivered unto us,” with the exception of the middle section on page 43.)

It has been suggested that the practice of the church life in the New Testament could be considered provisional, or a stage that is now past.

In this view, things have “evolved” along many lines as new situations have been encountered, etc., displaying the suitability of Christian faith to any situation. The result, however, is clearly one that flies in the face of biblical principles of love, oneness, the sufficiency of grace, and the church as the testimony of the kingdom of the heavens being God-led rather than man-led. Most people would agree that the current situation favors Satan more than God, especially when viewed in the light of what could be if Christians were unified wherever they lived rather than separated into competing groups.

Perhaps the practice of the church life in the New Testament has been inadequately studied and inaccurately presented.

Since we take the Bible as the unique standard for our teaching and practice, any new “discoveries” in the Word should be presented and thoroughly examined, while recognizing that certain principles such as oneness must be given more weight of consideration than practices that may divide.

Can’t other Christian groups be seen as “like-blessed”?

If that is really the case, we should perhaps go and meet elsewhere, because many Christian associations are well-organized and possess better resources.

Certainly God works through other groups, and leads others to them.

This has indeed been part of the journey of many of those among us. But if it be argued that such groups should be the ultimate destination for the Lord’s believers, it would have to be explained why God might lead some of His children to strengthen a system whose existence contradicts the nature of oneness exhibited in the biblical examples and teaching concerning the church.

Might we acknowledge Christian groups who take no particular, divisive ground?

Watchman Nee observed that satisfaction with what is better often keeps us from what is best. While such groups appear to be free from divisiveness, the purpose of the church as the collection of God's people remains unmet, since God does seek that His church would take a particular stand! Such groups often have formed as Christians have sought the Lord, and the Lord has been able to bring such believers into a further experience of the church life where they live. God's desire is that all His children would be brought on until they reach a life that satisfies both them and Him.

To stand as one in a city looks divisive, since we seem to stand apart from other groups already meeting and add just one more group to the mix.

Mathematically this might seem so, but in God's eyes it is not. When the remnant of the captive Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylonia to rebuild the temple upon its original site, they could have been seen as an additional group when compared to all the Jewish groups that were created in the Babylonian Empire during the captivity. Their return to the original ground, however, made them something unique and significant. After the same principle, we have often used the term "recovery" among ourselves for what we are doing in the churches. Furthermore, our stand is for all the believers where we live, it is not against them as individuals.

Is the matter of name really important?

In the Bible, the word "ekklesia" is used for the church in both its local and universal sense. ("Ekklesia" is translated "church" in nearly all English versions of the Bible.) The Bible says the church as the Body of Christ is one, which is a "universal" matter. This term "church" is also uniformly applied to Christ's believers meeting where they live practically and locally (e.g., "the church in Antioch"), making it seem as if there are many churches rather than one! Each local church, however, is simply the one Body seen in the localities where the members live. The expression of the church as the Body of Christ can in no way be something Lutheran, Methodist, etc., nor of anything that would make it smaller than the city or anything that would exclude any of the believers who live there. The local church includes all the members of Christ's Body where they live and expresses Christ's one Body. In the Bible, this is simply but aptly described in the formula "the church in (name of the city)," which allows for both aspects: the universal (wherever we live, there is only one Body) and local (including all the believers within the city). Such local bodies of believers recognize other such bodies and stand with them in fellowship.

Cannot all the Christian groups together within a town or city be seen as the church in that city?

All the *Christians* within a town or city can and *should* be seen as the church in that city, for they are all the members of the one Body of Christ. The “Christian” groups/organizations/institutions other believers identify with are the REASON they are not practically together. This is why it is important to distinguish between the believers and what causes them to group together in a way that divides the practical oneness of the Body of Christ.

What of the house church or the fact that so many metropolitan areas are made up of suburbs? Wouldn't it be ridiculous to require that someone meet in his city when there are others meeting right across the street in another city?

The fact that the Biblical unit of the church is the city reflects that each local church is an answer spiritually to the local authority of the “ruler of the air” over human government. While we may stand with those who meet as the lampstand within their city even though we don't live there, we should desire to see a lampstand raised up that would answer to “this present darkness” where we reside...where our neighbors live and over against the local umbrella of Satan's world government where WE live.

In this matter, a lampstand is a lampstand, no matter how many are meeting together. There is no indication in the Bible that there is a minimum number required to gather as the “testimony/anti-testimony” where they live.

The ability to fellowship with other believers should in no way be divided by locality, however. We should seek out and enjoy fellowship with any other lovers of Jesus, regardless of boundaries (or affiliations, for that matter). This issue, however, has to do with the city as the basic unit of government.

Besides the matter of city boundary, does anything else determine the practice of the local church?

Those who worked with Paul were to appoint elders and deacons to serve the church in every city where they labored. The matter of the elders leading the church and the deacons functioning under the direction of the elders will determine much about the practical church life. Elders are those committed by God with the churches and they are those who will answer to Him about their condition. Our acknowledgment of their responsibility is important for the proper local practice of the church.

- John Berglund



Serving Sisters Conference

Message Five Notes

We have to realize our setting has serious problems, for in the local churches it is usually the elders who are taking the lead and doing everything. (Which is right. As I told you already, respect your local leaders!) In the larger churches, the saints are normally in groups that repeat whatever is shared on the Lord's Day. They are not vital to produce what the Lord desires, although some places have been more successful than others in gaining people.

We should not care for the neighborhood meetings as much as we care that each household becomes a household that can care for others. With each household so exercised, we can expect to see blessing. It is because of this I am not for the neighborhood meetings. Instead, I would rather see every household become a home of fruit-bearing. If you are young or are not able to do it on your own, get together with some others in their homes. Reach out to new ones and provide warmth. We should be for something vital and of life instead of just conducting another meeting. Traditional meetings kill, but home meetings give life.

Why can't we make our homes a place of hospitality, of receiving the saints, and of bearing fruit? When we have such a joyfulness in our households, our church life will be very blessed.

I would encourage you to print a card with a number of addresses and phone numbers and pass them out to the young people. When they meet someone, they should feel free to call these phone numbers and tell them they are bringing this person over for dinner. Out of four phone numbers, there has to be one home available to give them a meal that particular night. Young ones are affected by this.

The more warmth we can produce in the church life, the better. We can attain such warmth if we open our homes to the new ones and to each other. How wonderful if our homes become places where people are hearing the gospel and becoming saved! Our homes can even become places where we pursue together, although this should not take any set form. You can just call one or two others and ask whether they would like to review a book with you for a two months or so. During that

time, you may build a real relationship with these saints. It doesn't have to be a heavy thing. It doesn't have to be done so deliberately. We need to develop a sweet church life. Perhaps some sisters would like to come together and learn to cook something together. Let us provide for one another a warmer and sweeter church life.

We are considering grouping the churches into seven areas of work: Toronto, the other churches in Canada, Michigan, northern Ohio, southern Ohio, Pittsburgh/Buffalo, Chicago/Indiana. In each area there will be someone that can be contacted easily. We will keep the elders in fellowship. The sisters in each area can come together once in a while; perhaps once a year all together and once a year in each area. The sisters can get into something together or simply fellowship together. The sisters are the real strength of the church. A healthy church should have 66 percent sisters, according to Watchman Nee (using the example of the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus). You can come up with something, and then fellowship with the elders. In such a way the sisters can become an encouragement to the leading brothers, many of whom are overburdened. They have prayed and fought a lot, yet for some reason the clear blessing of the Lord is not that much with the church life. So in every district I hope a few of you would come together and let us know what you feel you should do.

Today, if you sing the saints do not dance, and if you play the dirge, they do not mourn. People are limited, and most of the saints have passed through so much already and have gotten older. They get tired easily. This should be particularly true of the elders, so the sisters perhaps can do more to become their encouragement. However, any decisions should be made with the elders.

Americans do not seem to know how to handle money. For instance, many women go shopping when they are depressed, rather than praying! I have learned never to buy a Coca-Cola, for instance, while waiting at the airport. Instead, I just find a drinking fountain. When you are young, you should learn to take care of money. When you get older, spending money on certain things that you did not buy before may become necessary. Money is something we must learn to handle wisely. It seems this a cultural matter, since some cultures are more conscious of saving and giving.

These "small matters" are crucial to your going on.

For any sister to serve in a healthy way, they must learn to have a healthy relationship with the Lord through prayer, the hymns, and reading the Bible. This is the most important matter for your going on.





Secondly, the sisters must appreciate the saints. Wives know their husband's defects better than anyone else. My wife knows my defects, and yet she still honors me. To my thought, if I give a message, she is the one who shouldn't be listening. (Spurgeon's wife was like this, due to his weakness of smoking.) Most wives of servants of the Lord know their husbands are not that spiritual.

My wife loves me so much that it seems she doesn't even see the problems I have. The relationship you have with the leading ones is similar to the relationship you have with your husbands. Your leading ones may be peculiar and bothersome. Some elders seem to be floating in the air, and others are too involved. I cannot say they are great, for none of us are great, but we all are faithful and love the Lord. They know the Lord's commitment and somewhat understand how to care for the church according to their ability. Therefore you should love them, and even love them more as you realize they are as limited as you are. (If you married a very capable husband, whether you love him or not it doesn't matter much, for he will do well either way. If you married a husband who needs your love and support, then you really are his complement.) Most elders cannot be perfect leaders. They are not energetic like Obama; they are more like Gerald Ford. They are not Cadillacs; they are Fords. They may be high class models or mid-range, but they all work. Most are "Ford Focuses" because they are very focused on the church life and God's economy and what the Lord has committed to us, and because of them, the churches where they were could not be destroyed when the wolves came.

The elders among us, in general, really are the top. They are who they are; you cannot recreate them. Even God would not do such a thing. They are who they are, yet by the Lord's mercy they have been able to stand firm with the Lord for His interest through all these years. Love them. This does not mean, however, that you should leave everything to them. Many of you sisters should contact each other. This does not mean you are independent; you are still in the church life. If you can do this, it will mean less headaches for the elders.

You yourselves need to be persons of life and love. When you are healthy, the church where you are will be blessed, automatically.

Now we come to the last part. You as sisters are able to develop a field that belongs to you. You are not a church-goer, you are a church-OWNER. The church life should belong to you.

We go to the church of God's choosing, but how many dare say you own "shares" of "stock" in the church? The church belongs to Christ, but because you are invested, you also will surely desire to see the church

life do well. Many companies offer stock so that the employees will feel invested and have the realization that how the company does is affected by them. You all need a field.

A field can go two ways: it can be something lasting or something short-term. If you get help from a book you can share it with an elder and he may feel it would be profitable to read it with a few other sisters. If it becomes something that continues, you might continue it, with the elders' acknowledgment.

There are seven hundred sisters who are not present. They all need care. You should generate something that is very life-giving. You might go to a sister and find out she is new or young and has very little idea of what is what. Therefore you might spend some time with her once a week. (If it becomes something continuous you do need to fellowship with the elders.) My spiritual base came from Twelve Baskets Full by Watchman Nee. Perhaps some of you sisters may feel to read something spiritual. You may feel you can read it through the phone or during a meeting or in some other way. Among all the churches there should be many life-giving gatherings. Some might be more long-lasting. Perhaps you feel there is a need to learn some songs, especially after you receive the new hymnal. Therefore you may have some times together until you have done enough, and then you stop. (Remember, one problem sisters have is that they often do not know when to stop. You might pick something up again later after it has stopped.) I suggest you don't pick up any other songs for one year as you acquaint yourself with the hymnal.

Some sisters should be burdened for the love feasts. Anything you are burdened about is no longer a thing that must be done. When you feed your family, you know how much takes place at the table. Everyone talks about their day. Whatever service you become burdened for: cleaning or ushering or love feasts... in the church life there are easily fifteen things you can come up with that need to be taken care of. Pick up one, either by yourself or with another one or two. When you pick up something like this, you can almost do anything, for any item of service equals to the eldership. If you are faithful, when something is on your shoulder, you can revitalize the whole church life through it. To raise up the church, you preach the gospel, help someone to love the Lord, then you begin to pursue the Lord with that one and pray with that one, then you bring that one to preach the gospel with you, and so on.

Perhaps you need to get together a list of all the sisters' names and pray for them. As you pray for them, you realize some need visitation. You can go with some others and do this. Eventually you will be shepherding some. (Not, of course, so that you might control them. Honor them as fellow-sisters.) You may involve those that are revived in what you are





doing in your service. These sisters will be happy to find a place. Fellowship with the elders about what is going on. As you get more sisters involved, you will see that the whole church life has become more healthy because of your faithfulness in your service. Your service should become spiritual as you pray in your service for the saints. Let the elders bless you first before you serve, and use your service as a means to strengthen the church life as you sing and pray and enjoy the Lord together as you serve.

Any local church that has a cleaning service like this will be a very blessed church! Serve with the profit of the local testimony and the saints in view. When you are vital like this, your service will affect the whole church.

After you labor for awhile like this, you will come to know some sisters well. You will become companions. When you walk, there will be a strength, for you will have companions. Husbands and wives are one kind of companion, but in our spiritual lives we also need another kind of companion. Sisters need each other. We don't go on by ourselves. We seek after companions.

The field we have can become the protection of the saints. There is nothing called big or small or high or low. Even by cleaning the bathrooms you can grow. Everything in the church life can help you in life. It can adjust you and cause you to be sober before the Lord. Often, it exposes us and deals with our pride. It is a good way to grow and be perfected. It is also a good way to take care of new ones. It becomes an opportunity to spend time with the new ones and bring them into the church life. We may think that new ones need Beginners' Messages. I don't say this doesn't help; but it doesn't help them to feel a part of the church. It is when they serve that they begin to identify with all the others who are serving. Serving even helps new ones to understand spiritual things, for it is not merely a physical matter, but a spiritual one. If, as you serve, you are joyful in your spirit, new ones will be attracted.

It is in the field that you also learn coordination and blending. You learn to be with others. You are blended with others. (Blending means each one is organically blessed by being with others even as their individual portion is kept. Those who are blended together will remain very different according to who they are, and yet will gain something from each other of the Lord.) In serving you learn to fellowship. As you serve, you learn to deny yourself. Your field can become a prototype for the entire church life. As you learn and gain the Lord in your exercise, it becomes a model for everyone else where you are. In this way your service in your field becomes a great blessing to the church.

Titus Chu December 13, 2009 AM Ashland Woods (Sullivan, OH)